

XO Gets the Job Done

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As a journalist assigned to the public affairs office aboard a guided-missile cruiser, I

hadn't been a part of ship's company very long when a leak developed in a steam valve located in my office. I reported this problem right away to engineering and brought it to the attention of a zone inspector who visited my space a few days later.

In succeeding weeks, no one fixed the leak, which didn't really surprise me. I figured the snipes had a lot more important things on their to-do list. However, the leak grew steadily worse, and keeping a swab under it no longer worked very well. Besides that, some shipmates visiting the office were getting burned occasionally if they didn't pay attention to the drip.

I kept calling to report that the leak was getting worse, and I even showed it to my division officer and department head, but nothing happened. With the tile on the deck now starting to pop loose, I realized I had to find something to replace the swab. My solution was a coffee can held under the leaking valve by a piece of wire.

A few days after I had "fixed" the problem, the ship's XO unexpectedly visited my space. "What the hell kind of contraption is this, son?" he barked, staring in disbelief at the suspended coffee can. Before I could respond, his gaze dropped to the deck, where the popped tiles made the veins in his neck bulge.

Besides fixing a steam-valve leak, the engineers also welded a cabinet, similar to this one, in place.



As I explained the trail of events leading to what the XO had found, I watched him almost chew off the end of his cigar. I barely had finished my story when he yanked a phone from its cradle and dialed engineering. I remember thinking the petty officer who answered that call must have left skid marks on the deck getting to my office because he was there in a flash—just like the XO had ordered.

Suffice it to say that the leak was fixed immediately, and the engineers didn't stop there. They also welded a cabinet in place—one that I had been calling about since before the ship got underway. ☺

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